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Viewing cable 08BOGOTA3747, UNDERSECRETARY GLASSMAN'S OCTOBER 1 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT URIBE

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08BOGOTA3747	2008-10-14 13:20	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Bogota

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SUBJECT: UNDERSECRETARY GLASSMAN'S OCTOBER 1 MEETING WITH PRESIDENT URIBE

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer. Reason: 1.4(b,d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) President Alvaro Uribe told Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs James Glassman on October 1 that he appreciated President Bush's efforts to obtain congressional passage of the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA) but voiced concerns over the impact of the U.S. financial bailout plan on Colombia's economy. Uribe stressed that Colombia remains committed to its model of security cooperation, democracy, and private investment despite growing economic and political uncertainty in the region. He praised U.S. initiatives to use demobilized FARC members to discourage violent extremism in Colombian universities. Uribe said the GOC's demobilization and reintegration programs are successful, but face challenges in creating jobs and combating recidivism. Uribe welcomed two new initiatives building on the internet network Facebook's experience in Colombia to mobilize civil society. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Participants:

U.S.:

Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs James Glassman
Ambassador William R. Brownfield
Adnan Kifayat, Senior Advisor to Undersecretary Glassman
Jared Cohen, S/P
Julie Chung, POL notetaker

Colombian:

President Alvaro Uribe
Vice Foreign Minister Maria Clara Isaza
Frank Pearl, High Commissioner for Reintegration
Jorge Mario Eastman, Presidential Advisor for Communications
Patricia Cortes, MFA

ATPDEA Extension

¶3. (C) President Uribe told Undersecretary Glassman on October 1 that he appreciated President Bush's efforts in support of a congressional extension of the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA). Uribe said he thanked Secretary Rice by telephone yesterday. He voiced concern that a global credit crunch and U.S. financial problems would adversely impact Colombia's economy. Despite various challenges, Colombia remains deeply appreciative of U.S. support and is committed to working with the USG to promote democratic security, investment, and social cohesion.

Concerns over Regional Problems

¶4. (C) Uribe said the regional political climate is complicated and warned that democratically-elected leaders could easily slide into dictatorship. He noted that former Bolivian President Carlos Mesa told him recently that while most of Latin American seems unconcerned, Bolivia is teetering on the brink of disaster. Besides the hydrocarbon conflict, Bolivia faces a major challenge in trying to balance the indigenous majority's demand for economic justice against the minority's desire for greater autonomy. Uribe said the GOB will need to assess its strategy carefully if it wants to attract foreign investment. He noted that Venezuela has experienced prosperity in recent years due to oil production, but forecast a "grim" economic future as oil production stagnates, prices fall, and President Hugo Chavez' policies block private investment. This will be disastrous

for Venezuela. It will also hurt Colombia, which exported \$5 billion to its neighbor last year, mostly in labor-intensive manufactured goods and food products.

15. (C) In Ecuador, Uribe said President Rafael Correa's victory in the September 28 constitutional referendum will simply accelerate the slide to socialism. Ecuador is a deeply divided country, and Correa faces strong opposition from the media and business community. He predicted that Ecuador's constitutional assembly will likely make bad decisions, including limiting press freedom and privatizations, during the transition to a new legislature. In this environment, Colombia's model of security, investment, and democracy is an important alternative and will need continued U.S. support. U/S Glassman recognized Colombia's important role in the hemisphere and agreed its model is a positive force in the region. He also expressed shared concern over Venezuela and Ecuador, commenting that private capital might be able to shape their governments' behavior in the long run.

Demobilization and Reintegration Working

16. (C) Uribe said the GOC's demobilization and reintegration program continues to be a success despite being difficult and expensive. Over 48,000 former fighters have demobilized or deserted, 13,000 of whom were members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) or the National Liberation Army (ELN). He said paramilitary groups have been dismantled, and the new criminal bands do not fight the FARC or ELN. The GOC estimates 3500 members of new illegal groups are involved in narcotrafficking, including some relapsed paramilitaries. Uribe stressed that the educational programs and vocational training continue smoothly, but added that the reintegration program faces challenges in creating jobs for the demobilized. High Commissioner for Reintegration Frank Pearl said the program has created 2800 jobs--including 600 in the private sector and 800 through business ventures. Still, of the 21,000 demobilized with jobs, 70% work in the unstable, informal sector.

17. (C) Uribe congratulated U/S Glassman's planned visit later that day to Vista Hermosa in Meta department. Formerly a hotbed of FARC violence and coca cultivation, Vista Hermosa is now the center of GOC efforts to permanently retake land from FARC control. The GOC faces challenges in meeting popular demands for better infrastructure, as well as improved health care and education. Still, Uribe said the GOC provides relief to local residents through the "Families in Action" and the "Family Forest Ranger" programs. The latter encourages communities to work collectively for drug eradication. For example, once the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR's) certifies that a farm is drug-free, each family receives \$2000 per year.

War of Ideas: FARC and Youth

18. (C) U/S Glassman explained the U.S. initiative to connect demobilized FARC members with the online networking Facebook group that united youth worldwide against the FARC. To combat the romantic notions of the FARC held by many Colombian youth, demobilized FARC will address students at universities to explain the realities of terrorist groups and their deceptive recruitment tactics. The Colombian Facebook group will also share its experience at an international conference of similar youth organizations to strengthen ground-up efforts to combat violent extremism. Uribe praised the idea and expressed confidence that despite challenges, Colombians would not allow its path of security, democracy, and peace to reverse course.

19. (U) U/S Glassman has cleared this cable.
BROWNFIELD